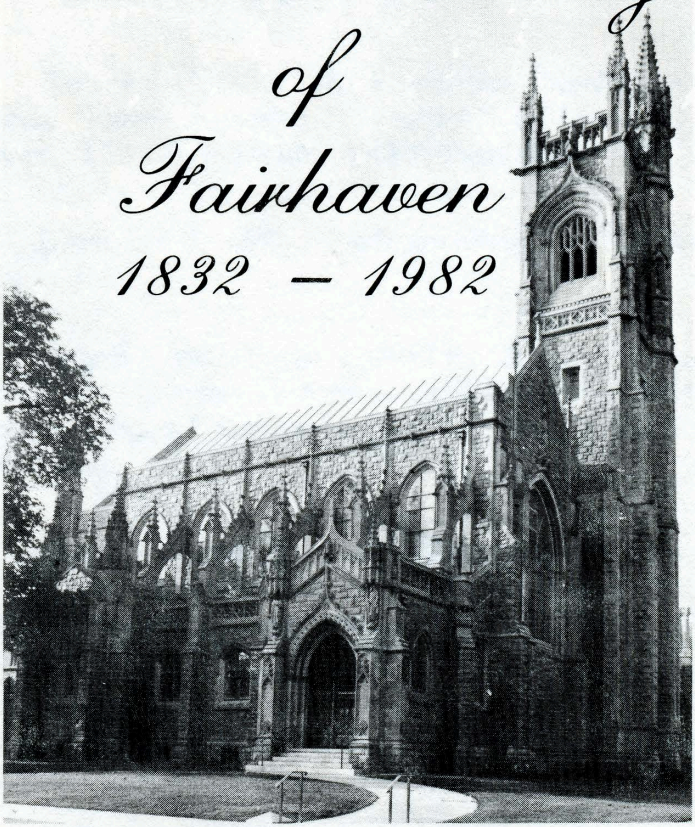
Unitarian Society of Fairhaven 1832 — 1982



Report of the Years 1932 - 1982

Compiled For The 150th Celebration

by

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Key Events

December 7, 1832: The Washington Street Christian Church, "mainly Unitarian in doctrine," organized by 22 persons. This building is now the Fairhaven Boys' Club.

December 7, 1882: Fiftieth anniversary of Fairhaven Unitarianism.

August 5, 1901: Cornerstone of the Unitarian Memorial Church laid, "thanks to the princely munificence of Henry Huttleston Rogers." Speakers included Mr. Rogers' close friend Mark Twain.

October 4, 1904: Dedication of the Unitarian Memorial Church, now considered "the finest example of 15th Century English Gothic architecture, perpendicular style," in the United States.

December, 1932: 100th anniversary of Fairhaven Unitarianism.

May through October, 1954: Fiftieth anniversary of dedication of Unitarian Memorial Church.

December 4 and 5, 1982: One hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Fairhaven Unitarianism.

Anyone interested in learning more about the early years of the Society may secure from the church office a copy of a history written by Job C. Tripp at the time of the 50th anniversary.

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF FAIRHAVEN

1932 - 1982

"On the 7th day of December, 1832, at the house of Elizabeth Adams, the church was reorganized by 22 members and called for the first time the Washington Street Christian Church. . . the same day it was voted to assess the pews 5 percent."

So spoke Job C. Tripp, elder of church and town, on the 50th anniversary of Fairhaven Unitarianism 100 years ago this month. The move from the Washington Street Church, now the Fairhaven Boys' Club, was then 22 years away; it was not until 1901 that Mr. Tripp updated his paper to record "the building of the new granite church and parish house for this church and society. . . a gift made possible through the princely munificence of Henry H. Rogers," and to note a membership of 180.

And now, late in 1982, the year in which the Society marks its 150th anniversary, we have occupied this beautiful structure for 78 years, and we verge on 300 members. The latter is not a spectacular growth figure, perhaps, but to go back to Job Tripp's century-old wisdom:

". . . a church cannot always be judged by statistics relating to . . . membership, because these are sometimes unreliable in showing what a church stands for. A Unitarian church which cannot show an interest in the public welfare and does not exercise an influence above and beyond its own immediate members is untrue to its trust and lives in a narrow sphere."

For the past 50 years our Society has lived in anything but "a narrow sphere." The breadth and concern of its interests are exemplified by its current 14 committees and organizations, at least half of which reach out in practical or cultural ways to Greater New Bedford and beyond, and, during the past five decades, by the eight men who have served this church as ministers.

The Rev. William H. Parker, who in 1932 had been minister for 11 years and was to remain here until 1939, at that time a record 18-year tenure for a Fairhaven clergyman, is loved and remembered for multiple accomplishments, perhaps especially for developing young people's work into what became the interdenominational Parker Club.

When illness forced Mr. Parker to resign, he was succeeded by the Rev. Wilburn B. Miller, a native of Maine who had lectured widely in the areas of philosophy and psychology, based in part on his experience in western Europe and the Soviet Union. Called from Unity Church in Brockton, Mass., Mr. Miller had several times exchanged pulpits with the renowned Dr. E. Stanton Hodgin, of the First Unitarian Church in New Bedford, before coming to Fairhaven, where he remained until 1945.

The Rev. Horace F. Westwood, who arrived here in 1945 fresh out of the Navy Chaplain Corps, where he had served as a lieutenant commander for three years, left in January of 1950 for a reason both poignant and symbolic. Having accepted a ministry in Houston, Texas, he told his Fairhaven parish:

"Our Unitarian membership in the entire Southwest is eager for liberal leadership. . . I have had to choose between a solidly secure, healthy church body housed in a beautifully built and excellently equipped church structure and the pressing needs of a Unitarian congregation not secure, well organized, or equipped. My decision carries my family from a formed church into an unformed one. The wisdom of this judgment rests with the future."

He was followed in 1950 by the Detroit-born Rev. Clifton G. Hoffman, director for two years of youth education of the American Unitarian Association in Boston and, prior to that, dean of students of the University of Chicago Divinity School. Known for his success with church schools and young people's work he was, like several of our ministers of the past half century, a "convert" to Unitarianism; his first pulpit had been in a Methodist church in a Detroit suburb.

After Mr. Hoffman resigned in 1955, the Rev. Alan G. Deale was chosen. During his three years here he was active, again like

many of his predecessors, in the Inter-Church Council of Greater New Bedford; in the course of his ministry the church received a citation for a 400 percent increase in donations to the Unitarian Service Committee and increased substantially its pledge to the American Unitarian Association annual appeal. He was also a Fairhaven town meeting member, a member of the Fairhaven Junior Chamber of Commerce, and assisted 10 Boy Scouts and Explorer Scouts to qualify for God and Country awards.

From 1959 until 1964 the church was led by the late Rev. Zoltan Nagy, a native of Hungary whose family, according to his obituary, had "raised Unitarian ministers for 200 years." He came to the United States in 1950 and is remembered by Fairhaven friends "as a man whose great compassion was demonstrated by his intense interest in the Unitarian Service Committee, a group working to provide for needy persons in many world areas."

Mr. Nagy also labored toward the merger of Unitarian and Universalist churches in America, a fusion which came about in 1961.

The Rev. Ernest A. Brown, Jr., elected in June of 1964, was a strong supporter of interchurch cooperation and community involvement; he served as chairman of Community Relations for the Inter-Church Council and on the Council's forum committee; was active in radio and education committees for the Massachusetts Council of Churches; vice president of the Fairhaven Improvement Association, president of two Parent-Teacher associations, and a Boy Scout chaplain.

The sorrow and shock felt by the parish and town when Mr. Brown, 57, died suddenly in June of 1970, having conducted the annual Rogers memorial service in this church that morning, is almost impossible to express. His widow, Elaine Brown, is an active and valued member of the Society at this writing, and their son, the Rev. Jeffrey Ernest Brown of the First Unitarian-Universalist Society of Laconia, N.H., made his third guest appearance as guest minister here in August of this year.

A second blow to the Society came in 1976 when the Rev. H.

Kelsey Bicknell, who had succeeded Mr. Brown in January of 1971, died after a brief illness; he was 51. An Army veteran of World War II, Mr. Bicknell was ordained a Methodist minister in 1958 and had served several churches in the state of New York before coming to Fairhaven; he had also given four years to the job of probation officer in the Monroe County Family Court in Rochester, N.Y. He was an effective president of the Fairhaven Improvement Association, a strong affiliate of the Inter-Church Council, and like many Unitarian ministers a man of letters whose poetry is remembered.

Virginia Bicknell, his widow, has also remained a loyal and constructive member of this Society. Her friends, perhaps especially those on the church scholarship committee, rejoice in her recent academic achievements, which have been outstanding.

Because ministers, like the rest of us, must have homes, it seems appropriate to mention at this juncture that the Parkers, Millers, Westwoods, Hoffmans, Deales and Nagys had all lived in what is now Harrop Center, then called the Unitarian manse, as had their predecessors since 1904. By the late 1950s the church felt the need of this lovely Tudor building for its expanding educational programs, so purchased as a parsonage the home of the late William B. Gardner, who had been a prominent member of the parish, at 35 Union Street; in January of 1961 the former manse was dedicated to Helen Harrop (Mrs. W. Earle Harrop), who had spent 25 years in the ranks of Church School leaders.

The Nagy, Brown, and Bicknell families occupied the Union Street residence, which was sold in 1976 in favor of allowing a minister to select his own dwelling.

The first to do so was our incumbent minister, the Rev. Robert A. Thayer, who accepted the call of this church in May of 1977. Born in West Virginia, he is a consistent champion of the unfortunate and ill-treated who served, before coming here from the First Parish Unitarian Church of Medfield, Mass., as chaplain and coordinator of Middlesex County Jail and House of Correction. He has carried on the tradition established by his forerunners by playing an active role in the Inter-Church Council and other broad-based community organizations. His

intellectual interests are also broad, as indicated in part by the fact that his degree from Harvard Divinity School was earned in the Near Eastern Department.

Because Bob, as he likes to be called, is guiding our course in this, our 150th year, it seems fitting now to include his capsule assessment of what Unitarianism is all about, and how he approaches the demanding task of ministering to a congregation made up of conservative theists, free thinkers, and those somewhere between:

"In the past half century the Unitarians expanded into Unitarian Universalists through a merger in 1961 which was at least predictable from their similar theologies if not already a sure thing through their World War II cooperation. Institutionally, we emerged from that war in a swing away from the older, more accepted standards of church life and belief (i.e. God, Jesus the teacher, Bible as liberally interpreted, prayers and rituals and hymns — and practically no social action) and we swung toward the humanist standards of Man the Measure and the Here and Now in much of our religious life.

"This merged church grew phenomenally through the 1960s and then declined just as phenomenally in the 1970s — the decline owing almost entirely to the divisive and strident controversies over racism, peace and war (Vietnam Era), humanism and sexuality/life styles. (A similar situation existed in almost all main-line Protestant churches.) Ministers, church members and churches suffered deep personal anguish and loss during this decline. Today the 14-year trend seems to have been reversed; 1981 statistics from UUA show a total adult membership of 136,760 and an increase over last year of 45 members. The total number of our churches and fellowships has increased by 20 to 1,002 over the past years.

"The Unitarian Society of Fairhaven incorporates today what has been termed classic Unitarian Universalism, namely the knowledge of and the celebration of the human reality of Earth, and yet openness to the sense of God, or ultimate reality; we respect the individual's religious search; and we share a heightened sense of our particular heritage as a liberal Christianity within Western society. As I approach our task, it is to

interpret, discover and to live within nothing less than Truth and Love, and practically speaking, to become that 'new-world alternative religion' which our founders dreamed would forge ahead in a pioneering way the evolution of the human race."

Bob is the first minister of this Society to have an assistant — the Rev. William E. Gardner of Falmouth, Mass., who retired from the active clergy in Wilmington, Delaware, several years ago, has given many popular sermons here, and has been of great help not only to the minister but to the finance committee.

In addition to our ministers, and the exceptional beauty of the sanctuary in which they officiate, the music at our services has become justly famous over the decades. This leads to a fact which may be unique in area annals:

Since the Unitarian Memorial Church was dedicated in 1904, it has had only two full-time organists. Alton B. Paull, the first of the two, served for 55 years — from 1904 until his retirement in 1959, at which time he was made organist emeritus. Mr. Paull was assisted for a brief time by organist William Parsons of New Bedford, and for a much longer period by Herbert H. Bowker, who succeeded to the post of organist and choir director in 1959 and is now in his 23rd year here.

Music at Sunset, a program offered each June during Rogers Memorial Weekend, was initiated in 1960 as a "loving tribute" to Mr. Paull, who had died the previous October. Later the names of concert pianist Enid Carruth, Helen Harrop, and Henry Huttleston Rogers were added to the list of those remembered, and in 1982, for the first time, that of Mildred Jones Keefe.

During the early years of Mr. Paull's tenure, vocal music at services was provided by a quartet; in the 1930s the choir grew to its present complement of eight or ten members, directed now by Mr. Bowker and led by Henry McGowan, whose solos from the minstrel gallery, at the close of the sermon each Sunday, have been a source of richness and joy since the fall of 1953.

Less glorious in sound, by the late 1960s, was the church organ, which had been in use since 1904 and had, according to Mr. Bowker, "started misbehaving badly" as it approached the

venerable age of 60. Ultimately Dexter Cate, a member of the parish who lives now in New Hampshire, sparked a move to do something about it. A year-long rebuilding, which involved melting down of the original pipes, was begun in 1971 by the F. Robert Roche Organ Company of Taunton, Mass., with the result that the giant instrument is today, again according to Mr. Bowker, "greatly improved."

The chimes, too, have undergone radical change. When the sanctuary was under construction, between 1901 and 1904, Mr. Rogers asked parish member Clifton A. Hacker to take charge of installing the 11 tower bells. Mr. Hacker completed the assignment late in 1903, became active chimer, and continued in the role for almost a half century.

It was he who transposed "several hymns from our hymnal" for use in the tower, remembers Frederick W. Sylvia, who became assistant chimer in 1932 and active chimer in 1957; in 1965, when a heart attack forced Mr. Sylvia to give up climbing the 75 steps to the loft and exerting the "considerable leverage" needed to ring the bells, the job was taken over by three young women of the parish in succession: Cynthia Knowles, and the Sylvias' daughters Nancy and Deborah.

In the meantime a committee composed of the Rev. Ernest Brown, Leonard E. Pierce, and Mr. Sylvia, began investigating an automatic chimes system which was completed in 1970. The tower music can now be initiated from a keyboard in a room adjacent to the sanctuary, or by mechanisms which resemble player-piano rolls.

The spinal column of any church, however, is of course formed not by an organ or chimes or architecture but by people, and the occasions which they create.

Highlight events of the past half century begin with the 100th anniversary celebration of December, 1932, in the parish hall. Thomas A. Tripp, then 75 and a highly respected town elder who was a member of the Society of Friends but attended meetings of the Unitarian Society with equal regularity, gave the keynote speech, a charming anecdotal account in which he recalled Delanos, Winsors, Nyes, Stoddards, Wests, and dozens of

others among the early faithful; sketched the changing geography of Fairhaven, and made, in his attention to the financial status of the church in the mid-19th Century the somewhat perennial comment that:

"The raising of money for salary and expenses continued to be a problem, for in 1842 the church, weary of promises difficult to meet, voted the new minister, Stephen Fellows, the uncertain salary of 'all we can raise.' The pastor stood it for a year."

Six years after the 100th anniversary, in 1938, came the first of nine productions of the Twelfth Night Revels, a lavish medieval pageant presented under the energetic chairmanship of Helen Harrop, repeated in 1939 and 1940, abandoned during the years of World War II, reinstituted in 1948, and presented every three years thereafter until 1963.

The idea for the Revels had come from Mrs. Charles Luce, and the first script was written in 1938 by Mrs. E. Franklin Dexter. A new and expanded script by William H. Poor and Mrs. Clarence I. Bangs appeared in the early 1950s, and dialogue was added from pageant to pageant by Mrs. Willis H. Doran, but the consensus is that Mrs. Harrop was the meticulous dynamo behind it all.

A re-creation of the Twelfth Night after Christmas in an English court, each pageant featured a cast of some 150 to 200 parish members and children, all authentically costumed, and required a full year of preparation. According to a newspaper report of the last production, in 1963, by which time the 160 audience seats were sold out well before Thanksgiving, the festivities included "two kings and two queens, their courts and pages, the burning of the Yule log and Christmas greens, a drinking of wassail in holiday toasts, a Mummers' play, wandering minstrels, dancers and jesters," and a Middle Ages roast beef feast following "the procession of the boar's head." The parish hall and dining room were "trimmed with boughs of holly, crammed with laden tables, and glowing in warm candlelight.

"After viewing Twelfth Night in Fairhaven," the reviewer concluded, "one doubts whether it could be carried out more perfectly anywhere else in the world."

Leonard and Betty Pierce were the incoming king and queen that last year of the Revels, having found the traditional pea and bean in the Twelfth Night cakes; they succeeded King Harold and Queen Joan Woodcock. Raymond and Marian Mitchell were the Lord and Lady of Memorial Manor, and Waldo E. Haydon the Lord of Misrule, a role he had played for many years. George A. Snedden, who had created the part of Master of the Hunt in 1938, carried the boar's head aloft once more, and Alvin Borges, who had suggested the roving minstrels for the first Revels, led them once again. Beatrice Winsor (Mrs. Bancroft Winsor) was Mrs. Harrop's co-chairman.

It is probably not an exaggeration to say that the Revels, which had spanned a period of 25 years, ended with the death of Mrs. Harrop in August, 1964.

Also produced by this gifted parish member, in the 1950s and 1960s, were several performances of Gian Carlo Menotti's one-act Christmas opera, "Amahl and the Night Visitors," with music directed by Herbert Bowker and major roles sung, in many instances, by members of this Society.

Another protracted, outstanding event of the past five decades occurred in 1954 when Fairhaven Unitarians marked the golden anniversary of the dedication of the present church building. Several months of celebration, which culminated in an October 3rd rededication, began with a May banquet attended by a galaxy of guests. Mr. Hoffman was minister here at the time; Beatrice Winsor chairman of the parish committee; Webster Wilde chairman of anniversary proceedings; Virginia Seaman (Mrs. John H. Seaman) banquet chairman; A.L. Rodgers master of ceremonies, and Dr. Frederick May Eliot, president of the American Unitarian Association, foremost of many speakers.

Dr. Eliot noted that star participants at the original dedication in 1904 had included Dr. Robert Collyer, the Rev. Minot J. Savage, and Henry Rogers' close friend Mark Twain.

Honored at the 1954 observance were Henry V. Bisbee, Clifton A. Hacker, Alton B. Paull, and Harry L. Pope, parish members who had served as ushers in 1904. In addition to their Unitarian longevity record, it is important to note that Mr.

Bisbee had been a member of the architectural firm which designed this church; Mr. Hacker, who was to leave a large tract of Rochester land for a boys' camp to the Unitarian Society, was of course our original chimer; Mr. Paull, dean of the organ and choir loft, and Mr. Pope a prominent businessman and lecturer who also served the Society as clerk for 25 years, a task in which he was preceded by his father, Nathaniel Pope, and succeeded by his son, Nathaniel Pope, 2nd.

Tributes to the above four were paid by William Tallman, veteran Parish Committee member who also praised the then-late Thomas A. Tripp, William B. Gardner, George B. Luther, and Herman Hathaway as "symbols of the highest integrity in the life of church and community" and pillars of Fairhaven Unitarianism.

Robert D. Coe, a grandson of Henry Huttleston Rogers and at that time United States ambassador to Denmark, was a guest of honor, as were young Michael Coe, a great grandson of Mr. Rogers; an impressive roster of clergymen, including the Society's longtime friend, Rabbi Bernard H. Ziskind of Tifereth Israel Synagogue, New Bedford, and the Rev. Arthur Hamilton Tripp, a native of Fairhaven who was at that time associate minister of Arlington Street Church in Boston.

To the objective observer it is of interest that Mr. Tallman, perhaps for the first time in the history of the Fairhaven Society of Unitarians, stressed the real importance of women in its ranks, and that Dr. Eliot noted a growing democracy in Unitarianism in general.

"A. . . change has come about in that the church looks to all the people for its financial support and not just to a few wealthy people," he observed. "This exemplifies that democracy and religion belong together."

The next occasion of note came in January, 1961, when Harrop Center was dedicated to Mrs. W. Earle Harrop, church school superintendent from 1937 to 1958; Dr. Dana McLean Greeley, first president of the newly-merged Unitarian-Universalist Association of America, delivered the sermon.

On January 24, 1974, the Society again honored one of its own when Webster Wilde, who had served as clerk for 35 years and 8 months, was given a standing ovation, an engraved watch, and words of praise from the Rev. H. Kelsey Bicknell, parish member Norman H. Hayes, and parish committee chairman George F. Fisher. Mr. Wilde, who died in October of 1978, was succeeded as clerk by Dorothea R. Paull, who was in turn followed by Virginia Letton (Mrs. William R. Letton), who fills the position at present.

A change in the Society's by-laws came about in April, 1976, when the parish committee, for many years the governing group of the Society, gave way to a newly-formed board of governors. John D. Masten, who had been chairman of the parish committee, became first president of the new board, followed by Barbara Spalding (Mrs. Samuel Spalding), Norman H. Hayes, and as of this year, Martha Cummings.

One more unique occasion in this list drawn from the past five decades: The caring for others which has been called the highest ethical ideal of Unitarianism reached out beyond United States borders in the fall of 1979 when our church, together with the First Unitarian Church of New Bedford, sponsored the arrival and settling in New Bedford of three Vietnamese refugees. The Nguyen family, which had escaped from its village northeast of Saigon by fishing boat, grew to four in 1980 because of the birth of a child, and has since been augmented by Vietnam relatives. All are adjusting well to life in America.

Interwoven with many of the above events of the past half century, especially with the annual Rogers Memorial Weekend held on the first Sunday in June, are descendants of one or more of Henry Huttleston Rogers' three daughters and one son (a fourth daughter, Millicent, died at the age of 18), several of whom — though scattered over many parts of the world — have maintained a strong interest in the church and town, and have made substantial and frequent gifts to the Society.

Henry Rogers Benjamin, a grandson of the town's famous benefactor, wrote in May, 1965, that he had "attended Rogers Sunday over 50 times" since his grandfather's death in 1909, accompanied by members of his family; more recently Paul

Peralta Ramos, a great grandson, has been present with his wife and one or more of his children. Though church records are incomplete in this area, historians' notes indicate that several descendants of Mr. Rogers' daughter Mary (Mai) Huttleston Rogers Coe have often traveled to Fairhaven for the June memorial, and for other town and church events. Elaborate floral pieces have been contributed by the family each June; a white memorial cross, on the face of the altar, has come to be a symbol of Rogers Sunday.

Until her death in 1939, which places her in the span attempted by this paper, the Rogers daughter who manifested the closest ties with Fairhaven, and with the Unitarian Church, was Cara, who became the wife of Urban H. Broughton of Great Britain, and ultimately Lady Fairhaven of Lode. It was she who gave the Lady Fairhaven Park, at the corner of Union and Green Streets, to the Unitarian Society, and, on a grander scale, Fort Phoenix to the town of Fairhaven, and Runnymede — the island in Surrey where the Magna Carta was reluctantly signed by King John in the year 1215 — to the British people in 1932.

Many of the highlights of our history sketched in the preceding paragraphs were sponsored by the church as a whole; equally important are those which go on year after year under the conscientious and hardworking leadership of the Society's organizations.

Of all these groups, the Women's Alliance is conceded to be the largest and most broad-based. Founded in 1895 by Mrs. Elbridge G. Paull, its biggest project has been, and remains, the support of the Clara Barton Camp for girls with diabetes in North Oxford, Mass. This aid was carried on for many years through the group's affiliation with the Boston-based General Alliance, and since 1961 through the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation.

On the local level the Alliance has given substantial gifts to the parish hall kitchen; organized the first tours of the church; sponsored the pre-Christmas fair which in 1974 became the All-Church Fair; underwritten the Twelfth Night Revels; supported for many years a popular dancing school in the parish hall; given financial support to Star Island, a Unitarian-Congregational

summer meeting ground off Portsmouth, N.H., and to a number of philanthropic homes and services.

The Alliance holds four meetings a year in addition to an annual meeting, an Alliance Sunday conducted by its members, and a Spring bridge party, the last-named its largest source of revenue. Esther Whitaker (Mrs. Ellis H. Whitaker) is its current president, and Harriet Ward (Mrs. David Ward), vice president.

A younger organization, but one which has grown with great strides in the past decade, is the Creative Arts Council, founded by Mildred Jones Keefe in 1973 — though the first Creative Arts Festival had been held in the church and parish hall under her direction the year before — and now responsible for a Christmas concert which attracts an overflow audience in the sanctuary each year, the annual appearance of the University of Massachusetts a capella chorale in the spring, and of course the June festival weekend mentioned above, of which an elaborate exhibit of crafts, produced by members of this and neighboring communities, is a highlight.

Miss Keefe was chairman of the Council until her death in 1981, and Milton K. Delano is the first, and to date only, vice chairman. Virginia Delano (Mrs. Milton K. Delano) is the group's historian; Herbert K. Bowker arranges the series of concerts held under the Council's auspices during the year, as well as appearances of guest soloists and musicians, and Kay Hayes (Mrs. Norman H. Hayes) and Marian Mitchell have served as key members of the group since its inception. Mrs. Hayes took on the big task of directing the Festival Weekend fair this year, which was dedicated to the memory of Mildred Jones Keefe and which combined, as Miss Keefe had wished, both arts and crafts. Mrs. Mitchell, following a precedent established by the Rev. and Mrs. Bicknell when the University of Massachusetts Chorale first sang here in 1969, has assumed for several years the large commitment of finding overnight housing for the 60 or 70 students involved; she has also written, in her capacity as a reporter for The Standard-Times of New Bedford, countless stories in support of the work of the Council.

Because Miss Keefe's death is recent, her loss still keenly felt, and her legacy rich, it seems pertinent to quote this passage

from her obituary of November 21, 1981:

"Miss Keefe was a retired educator and the founder of several creative arts festivals (in the nation). . . In 1975, she was the recipient of a medal from the Brazilian Academy of Humanities.

"In 1980, she attended the seventh international congress of a committee that composed a resolution calling for world peace through greater development and appreciation of the arts. At that time, she was quoted as saying:

"If we can't come up with constructive and creative ideas for mankind, we are a failure."

The good work of other church-affiliated groups is covered in the Society's annual meeting report of June, 1982, a copy of which was made available to each member of the parish at that time.

Because several groups flourished for many years between 1932 and 1982, but have now disbanded, they are noted here:

The Allen Class, an organization for working women of all denominations, is first mentioned in the clerk's minutes of 1917, in which year it had 58 members and a number of philanthropic projects. When it ceased meeting in September, 1972, after 55 years, it left the receipts in its treasury to the organ fund, the chimes fund, and the fund needed to supply the annual Christmas laurel ropes in the sanctuary.

In a similar manner the Pilot Club, established by and for young married couples in September of 1944, enjoyed 31 active years and voted its remaining funds, when it disbanded in 1975, to what it hoped would become a church scholarship program. The hopes were realized, for on June 15, 1978, the annual meeting of the Society took action which resulted in a newly-founded committee on scholarship. Esther Whitaker was its first and current chairman, and its first donation was a check for $613 from the old Pilot Club. Between June, 1981, and June, 1982, the committee lent $2,155 to four students.

The Leighton Club, an organization for men, was formed in

the same year as the dedication of this building — 1904 — and lasted until 1958, while the Church School Mothers' Club began in 1958 and continued until 1974.

The Parker Club, which had its genesis under the ministry of the Rev. William H. Parker in the 1930s, was the Society's strongest and most cohesive youth organization in the past half century. In 1935 it was know as the Parker Club YPRU (Young People's Religious Union) and after the 1961 merger of Unitarians and Universalists, as the Parker Club LRY (Liberal Religious Youth). It apparently began to disintegrate in the late 1960s, a time of confusion and frustration for many young people throughout the nation, and disbanded in the early 1970s.

The Church School of the Society, on the other hand, has met steadily in the past half century, and should of course have a historical report of its own; in a 50-year sweep as broad-based as this one, only skeletal materials related to so important a segment will be addressed.

In 1932, Church School enrollment was 200, average attendance 165, and hardy little kindergarteners claimed that they were 100 percent present each Sunday. Later information is contained in the following statement from Lisa Elliott (Mrs. Willoughby Elliott), director of the school since 1977:

"Our peak Church School enrollment of 300 during the 1950s was due in large part to the post-war baby boom as well as to a strong middle-class value that placed great importance on church school education.

"The Sixties saw the beginning of a decline in attendance as family size decreased, as did parents' interest in religious education. Our current enrollment of 60 has slowly risen from a low of under 10 youngsters in the 1970s.

"The curriculum used throughout the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s was a liberal approach to the Bible and the leadership of Jesus common in many Protestant churches of the period. In the 1960s, the focus changed dramatically to one of humanism, social concerns, and anthropological studies. The Seventies were characterized by an emphasis on personal growth in a changing world. In the 1980s there is a broadening of philosophy

to include study of our Judeo-Christian heritage, world religions, and humanitarian values."

A roster of Church School directors of the past half century begins with the name of Roswell Dunham, who served from 1932 to 1937; Helen Harrop, whose 21-year tenure stretched from 1937 to 1958 and whose enthusiastic though conservative teachings influenced many who are now middle-aged members of the parish; Leonard Pierce, assisted by George Snedden, 1958 to 1963, and Allan Roscow, 1963 to 1964. Between 1964 and 1971 the school had no director, but was operated by a series of religious education committee members. In 1973 a director was hired: Vivienne Guild, who was succeeded by Sara Wright Lawrence, 1975 to 1977.

Women strongly associated with the Church School prior to and since 1932 included Miss Mary E. Bradford, who died in Fairhaven in 1940 at the age of 82. Daughter of William Bradford, whose reputation as a marine artist is internationally known, she taught in the Church School for many years — her high-school age pupils included current parish members Miriam Nealy, Dorothy Masten, and Irma Moore — and was among founders of the Fairhaven Federation of Women's Church Societies, which meets three times annually and with which our Society is still strongly allied.

Another was Mildred C. Mosgrove (Mrs. Anthony H. Mosgrove), who resigned as a Church School teacher in 1944 after serving for 36 years. She died here in 1953. A former governness of Beatrice Benjamin, (a granddaughter of Henry Huttleston Rogers), Mrs. Mosgrove was the author of our booklet, "The Memorial Church," which is still presented to new members as a welcoming gift, past president of the Allen Class and of the Women's Alliance, wife of the first sexton of this church, and the mother of Beatrice Mosgrove, lifelong Fairhaven Unitarian whose head, when she was a child, was carved in stone on the south left wall inside the south door to the sanctuary.

Even a brief account of youth activities in the Unitarian Society must include mention of Boy Scout Troop 55, which is

sponsored by this church and has been in existence for 41 years; its charter is dated December 4, 1941. George A. Selley, the first scoutmaster, served for 13 years, and J. Norman Habicht, Raymond S. Sumner, and Samuel Dexter for shorter periods. Probably the longest tenure was that of Harold C. Holmes, who retired as scoutmaster last summer after 20 years, but remains a member of the troop committee.

Particularly memorable among other veteran troop committee members is Charles L. Faunce, who served until his death, at the age of 102, in July of 1967.

Unitarian outreach is perhaps nowhere better demonstrated than in the annual Scout Week observance which Troop 55 and Troop 8, the latter of Tifereth Israel Synagogue, New Bedford, have jointly celebrated each February since 1950. During that week the two troops attend, in uniform, a Sunday service in our church and a Friday service at Tifereth Israel.

Although many Girl Scout groups have used our buildings over the years, the Unitarian Society did not sponsor a troop until 1981; Mrs. Pat D. Byrd, a member of the parish, began this year to serve as consultant to this and related units.

And now, at last, to the church structure itself. Our 78-year-old building is perhaps the finest example of 15th Century English Gothic architecture, perpendicular style, in the United States, and has had fewer woes than structures less magnificently built.

In 1940, however, the steel frames reinforcing the two towers at the west door were found to be corroded; built in four sections ranging in weight from one-half to four tons, the towers were removed and the steel replaced with brick. According to a Fairhaven Star of early August, 1940, they were raised to their heights again, when the work was finished, by "one of the largest truck cranes in New England; it has a lifting power of 20 tons."

The next major repairs were necessitated by nature: a bolt of lightning struck the church on May 20, 1959, "knocking off several feet of the topmost spire and hurling a smaller spire to the ground." The Star account of May 21 continues: "Fortunately

no one was injured as several tons of stone came crashing down on the church lawns." At a special meeting of the parish committee damage was estimated at $21,538; the insurers offered $19,990, which was accepted; it was also voted, on recommendation of William Tallman, who presided, that lightning rods be installed and that the copper roof of the church be grounded.

Vandals, too, have taken their toll, especially in September of 1978, when Robert Reid's working painting for the Nativity scene stained glass window in the sanctuary, appraised at $5,000, was cut from its frame in the church dining hall. A number of brass objects and 118 pieces of French porcelain tea and dinnerware, the whole retroactively appraised for $2,910, disappeared during nighttime burglaries in the same month.

An alarm system and spotlights have since been installed and losses, though not entirely eliminated, have decreased greatly.

A series of other repairs and safeguards, initiated in part because of breakage of 15 stained glass windows over the decades — none in the sanctuary — began in 1978 and continues at this writing. When the project is finished, Lexan will cover all stained glass. All gutters have been repaired in the past four years, as have cement walks and a portion of the roof over the church office; leaks, too, have been remedied.

The church building and contents are insured in this year, 1982, for $2,844,000, though the consensus is that they could not be replaced for twice that sum. In addition the Society carries a fine arts floater of $315,785, and $300,000 in comprehensive single-limit liability to cover personal injury, libel and slander, and the like. The yearly premium to the New Bedford insurance firm of Cornish and Company is $5,563.

At the time the church was built Mr. Rogers expressed the wish that it be open to visitors; this wish has been honored, but it is impossible to tell exactly how many persons from the United States and abroad have taken advantage of the opportunity over the past half century. The Fairhaven Star, whose files have been meticulously combed by the Society's historians, reported in

1940 that 1,000 tourists, spurred on in part by the Fairhaven Improvement Association's information booth on Huttleston Avenue, had visited the church in the summers of 1938 and 1939.

Moving up to the present, we find that between July 3, 1981, and July 7, 1982, 531 signed the visitors' book, but because many of these signatures were those of groups and families, it seems likely that the realistic total was closer to 700 or 800. (We do know that they came from 33 of the United States and from the District of Columbia.) So perhaps an overall estimate of 25,000 visitors in the past half century, an average of 500 a year, is not far from accurate.

So many members of the parish have acted as guides to these guests that it is unwise to attempt to name them for fear of omission; it does seem appropriate to close this report, however, with the names of the Society's secretaries since 1932, who have added church guiding, when necessary, to a host of other duties.

The list of these women, each of whom proved indispensable in her time, begins with Nella Tallman Lange, who was here from 1945 to 1949; Pauline Raymond, to 1953; Marion Richards, from 1953 to 1958; Dorothea Paull, to 1966; Marjorie Cory, assisted for a time by Elaine Brown, from 1966 to 1974, and Dorothy Masten, 1974 to the present.

To end on an informal but sincere note: If conspicuous omissions or errors occur in this report, it is not too late for addenda which members of the parish feel may be of information or value to Fairhaven Unitarians in the 200th anniversary year of 2,032.

HENRY HUTTLESTON ROGERS
1840 - 1909

married

M. Abbie Palmer Gifford 1841 - 1894

married **Emil**

1. **ANNE ENGLE**
1865 - 1924

married

William Evarts Benjamin
1859 - 1940

Beatrice
1889 - 1956

Henry Rogers Benjamin
1892 - 1967

2. **CARA LELAND**
1867 - 1939

married

Bradford Ferris Duff
1869 - 1893

married 1895

Urban Broughton

Huttleston
1896 - 1966

Henry Rogers
1900 - 1973

married

Lady Diana

Lord and Lady Fairhaven

Ailwyn Henry George
1936 -

married

Patricia McGill

3. **SON**
December 25, 1870

4. **MILLICENT GIFFORD**
1873 - 1890

5. **(MARY) M**
187

m

William R

William Rogers Coe
1901 - 1971

Robert Douglas
1902

(Former Ambassador to Denmark)

Henry Huttleston Rog
1907 - 1966

FOR COMPLETE GENEALOGY - SEE CHURCH OFFICE

y **B.** - died 1912

AI HUTTLESTON
5 - 1924

arried
obertson Coe

6. **HENRY HUDDLESTON, JR.**
1879 - 1935

married
Mary Benjamin
1878 - 1956
divorced 1929

Beaters
1889 -

Natalie Mai (Countess)
1910 -

(Mary) Millicent
1902 - 1953

1
married
Count Salm

Peter
1924 -

Henry Huddleston, III
1905 - 1948

2
married
Arturo Peralta - Ramos

Arturo, Jr.
1928 -

Paul
1931 -

3
married
Ronald Balcom

Beatr
1889 -

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